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“Southwest Georgia’s Inner Civil War: Race, Violence, and the Media”

During the Civil War, southwest Georgia largely remained untouched by battles and the physical destruction of war. The region did, however, experience the war, particularly if one adheres to historian Steven Hahn’s suggestion that the conflict included a “massive rebellion of southern slaves.” Since this particular region was untouched by one area of the war, it lends itself to historical investigation about the relevance of Hahn’s findings. By examining court records, personal correspondence, and newspapers, I will argue the area was rife with racial violence and contention to the level of subverting control from masters.

The main topic of this paper is how the area’s media outlets played a role in undermining black activism in southwest Georgia. In spite of the ever-expanding literature of Civil War and Reconstruction histories, this region has largely been neglected despite its rich history and reputation for violence and backlash against black rights. The goal of this presentation is to delve deeper into the role that newspapers played in the realm of race relations during the war, especially important when compared to how the media has helped shape and reshape the current debates over monuments. As such, a majority of the newspaper sources used in this paper emanate from written editorials and were meant to push certain ideas on the people, and, at times, this was successful. Focusing on the media in an area largely untouched by battles will aid in the attempt of seeing a more complete picture of the Civil War era and the memory thereof, because and not in spite of its isolation.